

**Opening Statement of U.S. Senator John McCain
Chairman, Senate Armed Services Committee**

**Room SD-G50
Hart Senate Office Building
Tuesday, March 10, 2015**

**To receive testimony on the posture of the Department of the Navy in review
of the Defense Authorization Request for Fiscal Year 2016 and the Future
Years Defense Program.**

(As Prepared for Delivery)

The Committee meets today to receive testimony on the plans and programs of the Department of the Navy for fiscal year 2016. I want to thank each of our witnesses for their distinguished service to the Nation, as well as the Sailors, Marines, and civilians they lead who are serving around the world today.

This is Admiral Greenert's last posture hearing before this committee as Chief of Naval Operations, and I know he is heartbroken that he will never come before us again. I would like to thank you for your forty years of distinguished service to our Navy and wish you and Darleen all the best in the future.

In the last three months, some of America's most experienced statesmen and strategic thinkers have offered this Committee a clear, unified, and alarming assessment of current worldwide threats and U.S. national security strategy: As Dr. Kissinger testified on January 29, "The United States has not faced a more diverse and complex array of crises since the end of the Second World War."

The actual global challenges we face are compounded by the limitations of the Budget Control Act and sequestration, which are a self-inflicted national security crisis. Indeed, all four of the military service chiefs have testified that defense spending at sequestration levels would *put American lives at risk*.

Now more than ever, a strong Navy and Marine Corps are central to our nation's ability to deter adversaries, assure allies, and defend our national interests. From our strategy of rebalancing to the Asia-Pacific region, to conducting ongoing operations against ISIL, to deterring rogue actors like Iran or North Korea, to many other requirements, the U.S. Navy and Marine Corps are key pillars of our national

security strategy.

And yet, by any measure, today's fleet of 275 ships is too small to address these critical security challenges. The Navy's Force Structure Assessment requirement is 306 ships. The bipartisan National Defense Panel calls for a fleet of 323 to 346 ships. And our Combatant Commanders say they require 450 ships. But under sequestration, the Navy has said the Fleet could shrink to 260 ships. Equally troubling, the Marine Corps continues personnel reductions down from 202,000 active duty Marines in 2012, to 184,000 today, to 182,000 in 2017.

With the demands on our Sailors and Marines rising, these force reductions, coupled with major readiness shortfalls due to sequestration, are lengthening deployments, cutting training and time at home with families, and putting our all-volunteer force under considerable strain. The President's budget request attempts to buy as much readiness as the Department can execute for FY16, and this is yet another reason why we cannot afford a defense budget at sequestration levels.

The President's budget also includes significant funding requests for major Navy and Marine Corps acquisition programs. In the current fiscal environment, it is all the more important for this Committee to conduct rigorous oversight of these programs to ensure that the Department of the Navy is making the best use of limited taxpayer dollars. That is exactly what we will do.

With the Littoral Combat Ship, despite initial cost overruns that more than doubled the cost per ship, the Navy now appears to have stabilized the cost of the LCS sea frames. And yet, the program still faces challenges to deliver the promised warfighting capability. All three of the LCS mission packages still need significant further testing and must overcome major technology integration challenges.

Regarding the Secretary of Defense's decision to upgrade the LCS, this Committee will continue seeking further information to justify this decision. Without a clear capabilities based assessment, it is unclear what operational requirements the upgraded LCS is designed to meet, and thus how much more lethal and survivable the ship needs to be. In short, the Navy must demonstrate what problem the upgraded LCS is trying to solve. We cannot afford to make this mistake again.

With the first three Ford-class carriers, despite cost-overruns of more than \$2 billion each, this program has not exceeded the cost cap in the last three years. However, the second Ford-class carrier, the USS *John F Kennedy*, will deliver in

Fiscal Year 2022 less capable and less complete due to the Navy's proposed two-phase delivery approach. This plan would leave us with an incomplete ship should world events demand an additional aircraft carrier, or if the USS *Nimitz* encounters unforeseen problems in the final years of its fifty-year service life. I am also concerned about the Navy's plan to delay full ship shock trials from the first to the second Ford-class carrier. That delay is hard to justify for a new ship this complex.

This Committee also has a duty to shape the future of our Navy and Marine Corps. With three surface combatant classes set to retire soon, now is the time to lay the analytic groundwork to replace these ships. As the Navy develops requirements for the next class of amphibious vessel, we must ensure that our warships are capable of supporting the Marines in the manner they plan to fight in the future. We must also carefully examine the future aircraft carrier fleet and the carrier air wing—\$12 billion or more for one ship is simply too expensive. We must do even more to reduce costs and increase competition within the aircraft carrier program. And as challenges to American power projection grow, we must chart a path to achieve unmanned strike capability from our aircraft carriers.

We look forward to the witnesses' testimony today and hope that they will cover the broad spectrum of policy, procurement, readiness, personnel, and resource issues that the Department confronts.